

JAN 16 1953



Pam
Japan

JAPAN

*"A Mission Opportunity,
Unparalleled in History"*

A New Mission Field
of the

**NORTH AMERICAN BAPTIST GENERAL
CONFERENCE**

7308 MADISON STREET, FOREST PARK, ILLINOIS



—Ewing Galloway Photo

A typical scene in Japan on one of the better streets of Yokohama.

THIS IS CHRIST'S HOUR FOR JAPAN

By the REV. JAY HIRTH.

Crowded into a land area smaller than that of the state of California, more than 83 million Japanese people live from day to day in Japan. It is an island empire lying in crescentic shape off the northeast coast of Asia, close to Korea, China, Siberia. The four main islands form a chain over 1,300 miles long, but averaging only about 100 miles in width.

In 1948 there were about 524 people living to the square mile in Japan. Since that time the population has increased. Therefore there are towns and villages all over Japan.

Since the islands of Japan are of volcanic origin, they are very mountainous. There are about twenty active volcances in Japan, and many more inactive ones. Earthquakes, typhoons, tidal waves and fires are also very common in Japan, and these forces annually cause much destruction and hardship.

THE JAPANESE PEOPLE

While the earthquakes and volcanoes have caused much destruction, they have also created many beautiful and scenic places. Everywhere wooded mountains can be seen with cascades and waterfalls abounding. The valleys with their little villages and farms are also of inconceivable beauty. It is in the midst of surroundings like this that peerless Fuji, the highest volcano, towers 12,365 feet above sea level. Mt. Fuji has been inactive for some 250 years, and it is considered the pride of the nation.

The Japanese people possess many attractive traits. They are clean and neat in person and habit, exceptionally aesthetic in their taste, always zealous

to learn, and very enterprising and ambitious. Politeness characterizes the people of Japan, and an outward appearance of happiness and unconcern well conceals the inward fear and anxiety of the future that faces them.

Even after Japan's defeat in the last war, filial piety and national patriotism are still very outstanding in Japan. The individual almost always comes after the will of the state and family. Unfortunately, other important moral virtues have been lightly regarded, and lying and licentiousness are recognized as nationwide sins. It is not an uncommon practice (especially in the rural areas) to sell the children to a life of shame and bondage, and for the children to accept their dreadful fate as a matter of course. The ancient religions had a big influence in moulding the present moral and social values of the people today.

RELIGIONS IN JAPAN

After Japan's defeat and the abolishment of state Shintoism, it was the prevailing belief among Japanese and Occidental people that Shintoism would disappear. However, since 1947 a steadily increasing revival of Shintoism has been in progress. As the priests of sectarian Shintoism and state Shintoism organized, the religion became more attractive and now it has a greater following than before the war.

Already our missionaries have witnessed many of the ceremonies and rites of the national and local shrines. They have seen thousands and hundreds of thousands stream to the shrines with hopeful anticipation, only to leave with empty hearts. In 1950 there were an estimated 42 million adherents to Shintoism.



Jay and Esther Hirth sitting on the floor of the Ta-ta-mi (straw mat) room reading a letter from the Forest Park Headquarters while Linda also has her own letter, one from home.

Buddhism also has a great following in Japan. However, it does not have the ceremonies of pomp and color which the Shintoists have, and therefore it is more a religion for the crisis time of life. In Japan it is not uncommon for an individual to be both a Buddhist and a Shintoist. However, the degree of belief and participation differs widely from families who are simply parish members to those who are active and devout followers. Almost every home in Japan has either a Kami-dana (Shinto god-shelf) or a Butsu-dana (Buddhist god-shelf) in it.

There are many sects in Buddhism as there are in Shintoism. Of the many sects Shinshu and Zen are the largest. In 1945 the Shinshu sect had 19,742 temples and 16,043 priests. It is by far the most popular form of Japanese Buddhism. The chief tenet of this sect is that of salvation by faith in Amida. To say



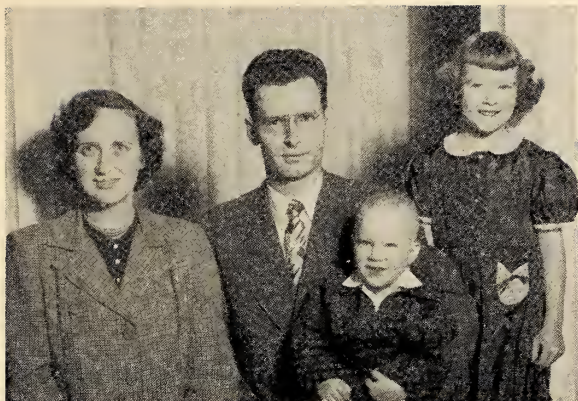
A sacred box is being carried through the streets by Shintoist priests (left) in which deities are supposed to be. At the right is another miniature shrine in which the gods are thought to dwell.

sincerely “Namu Amida Butsu,” or “Namada, Namada, Namada” by the devout, as they bow before an image of Amida, is to be saved by Amida and assured of a place in the Western Paradise.

The Zen Sect of Buddhism on the other hand has a different stress of doctrine. Salvation by works, attaining enlightenment by self-discipline, both mental and physical, is stressed. Along with these provisions for their salvation, there are many other deities for the purpose of providing personal security.

OUR MISSIONARIES

On November 7, 1951 the Rev. and Mrs. Jay Hirth and their baby daughter, Linda Lea, set sail for Japan. Accompanying them was Miss Florence Miller, the third of our first missionaries to Japan. Shortly after arriving in Japan, our missionaries began the difficult task of learning the Japanese language. In the spring of 1953, our missionaries are completing their studies in the Tokyo school. Then they will move out to the



Rev. and Mrs. John Rhoads and their children, Marion Jane and John David, our missionaries to Japan who sailed in May 1952.

rural area to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to those who have never before heard of Christ.

In addition to our first three missionaries, another couple was appointed to the Japan field at the April, 1952 session of the General Missionary Committee. The Rev. and Mrs. John Rhoads, and their two children, Marion Jane and John David, arrived in Japan on June 12, 1952. Although this couple is under appointment by our board, they will also work with "Youth for Christ" in Japan for one or two years. The Rev. and Mrs. John Rhoads served in China for three years under the China Inland Mission, and for six months with "Youth for Christ" before being appointed to our Japan field.

After our missionaries move out to the rural area, they will continue to study the language by private tutor. However, while they are studying the language in the village, they will be making contacts with the nationals and getting our permanent mission work



The Shinto dancer (left) is ready to perform his dance to appease the gods at Yasukuni Shrine in Japan while a throng of people watch the dance (right) hoping for some spiritual blessing.

started. From a centrally located machi (town) or mura (village), they are looking forward by God's abundant grace and blessing to see Japanese nationals come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

As these Christians are grounded in the Word of God, strong Baptist, indigenous, self-supporting, self-disciplining and self-governing churches will be established. At the same time, with the help of the new converts, Sunday Schools, Bible classes and other churches will be started in surrounding villages, thus making an inroad into the villages where Satan has ruled undisputed for centuries. With this program our denomination has a stirring opportunity through our missionaries to accomplish a new and difficult task for the glory of God in the villages of Japan.

"LOOK UNTO THE FIELDS . . ."

There are 245 cities in Japan, and some kind of a Protestant church is located in 229 (93 percent) of them. Included in this count is Tokyo which has 24 percent of all the Christians in Japan. There are 1,815 towns (machi) in Japan, and of these only 487 (27 percent) have Christian churches. There are 8,381 villages (mura) in Japan, but in **only 193** (2.3 percent) of them are Christian churches located. (A "mura" is a fairly large rural area, each one usually containing 15 to 20 hamlets.) More than 67 percent of the people live in the rural area. Rural Japan desperately needs the Gospel.

Since missionaries have concentrated their efforts in cities, the picturesque but pagan mura (village), with its long succession of house clusters, rice paddies



A group of old men leading the procession of Shintoists to their sacred shrine for worship.

and gods, is almost untouched. For example, in one prefecture (state) on Shikoku Island there are seven guns (counties) and a city with a population totaling well over 416,000 people. In this area, there are only four churches.

In Kagawa prefecture on this same island, there are more than 570,000 people in five guns (counties). Each county has anywhere from 14 to 26 towns or villages in it, along with the surrounding hamlets. In

this prefecture there are only four churches. "These churches," said an old evangelical pastor to one of our missionaries, "do not have true Gospel faith." "One of the reasons why such little work has been done in areas like Kagawa," said another elderly Japanese pastor, "is because of the conservatism of the people. Shintoism makes a field like this very difficult and hard to work."



Miss Florence Miller, our missionary in Japan, comes from a family that is actively serving the Lord. Her brother is Rev. Edwin W. Miller of Cleveland, Ohio, and two of her sisters are pastors' wives, Mrs. Dale Chaddock of Arnold, Pa., and Mrs. Edgar B. Wesner of Peoria, Ill.

These areas are not isolated places where evangelization must be done. There are many places such as this where the power of the Gospel upon the customs and creeds of centuries has never been given an opportunity to perform its miraculous regenerating work of grace in the hearts of Japanese. All over Japan there are searching hearts and out-stretched hands of spiritually starved villagers who have never yet heard the Gospel message of the Lord Jesus Christ.

OPPORTUNITIES AND OPPOSITION

The opportunities are not as great in Japan as they were in the years following the 2nd World War. The spiritual vacuum which was so pronounced after the war has been filled in the lives of many. Red Communists with their deceptive propaganda and riot tactics have been making large inroads among the working class and the student groups. Shintoism has given evidence of a revival and a turning back by many to its ancient indigenous beliefs and colorful religious celebrations. Signs of increased nationalism can be seen on every hand.

In spite of these obstacles, God's evident hand of blessing has been on Japan. The doors are still open and evangelical Christianity has a glorious opportunity of building a strong church in Japan. Ninety-nine percent of the Japanese people are literate. The Japa-



—Ewing Galloway Photo

Japanese young people are eager to learn and many of them have open hearts for the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

nese are interested in learning, eager to read the Bible and Christian literature, and willing to listen to a Gospel message. The Japanese people are leaders. Japan is the most strategic country in the Orient today.

Many evangelical missionary leaders still feel that Japan is a most opportune field and that our opportunity is unparalleled in history. It is even as a young Japanese convert said in a forceful manner at a recent G.I. Gospel Hour meeting in Tokyo: "Today is the hour for Christ in Japan; tomorrow will be too late."

PRAYER REQUESTS:

1. Pray that the doors in Japan will remain open, and that God's hand of visitation may be stayed.

2. Pray that the forces opposing the Gospel of Christ such as Shintoism, Buddhism, Communism, Roman Catholicism and secularism may be held back until Japan has an opportunity to be evangelized and a strong church established.

3. Pray that God may give our missionaries wisdom and understanding as they learn to read, write and speak the difficult Japanese language.

4. Pray that God will guide us as we are seeking a permanent area to start our mission work, an area where the need is great, and where God has prepared open and responsive hearts. Pray for this area in which God wants us, the North American Baptist General Conference, to evangelize, in which God wants us to build a Church unto his praise, honor and glory.